



# St. Lucie County Legislative Update

## Inside this issue:

Negron Plan	1
House Schedule	1
Beaches	2
Whiskey & Wheaties	2
Local Business Tax	2

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## Our Mission....

*To provide service, infrastructure and leadership necessary to advance a safe and sustainable community, maintain a high quality of life, and protect the natural environment for all our citizens.*

## RUBIO SAYS NEGRON PLAN WILL TURN FARMING COMMUNITIES TO "GHOST TOWNS"

Senate President Joe Negron said Thursday his proposal for an Everglades water storage reservoir is making "tremendous progress" despite criticism from U. S. Sen. Marco Rubio whose backing would be key to gaining federal support, reports Bruce Ritchie of Politico.

Negron's proposal in SB 10 appears to be on life support after Rubio told the conservative Shark Tank blog that building the 60,000-acre reservoir would create "ghost towns" for farming communities.

Rubio, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, also said there isn't federal funding available to provide the federal match for the \$2.4 billion reservoir. For months, Rubio has also warned of the dangers of the state changing its timetable for Everglades projects.

Negron said the issue is about "sequencing and timing" and that from his point of view, "We can still move forward."

## HOUSE RELEASES SCHEDULE FOR BUDGET

The House is tentatively scheduled to vote on its budget April 13, the chamber said Thursday.

The House Appropriations Committee will submit its proposed 2017-18 budget Wednesday, April 5, 2017.

Those proposed committee bills will be filed and go straight to the House floor for consideration by all members.

The committee will make the budget documents available no later than 8 a.m. Friday, March 31.

Members face a series of deadlines to submit amendments to the budget. Main amendments to budget must be filed no later than 4 p.m. Monday, April 3, 2017. All amendments to amendments and substitute amendments must be filed no later than noon Tuesday, April 4, 2017.

The committee will file and publish the General Appropriations bill, the implementing bill and conforming legislation, as amended no later than 4 p.m. Thursday, April 6, 2017.

Members will have until 4 p.m. Monday, April 10 to file main amendments on the floor. Amendments to main amendments or substitute amendments for main floor amendments must be requested by noon Tuesday, April 11.

Second reading is tentatively scheduled for April 12 and third reading for April 13. Hopefully, budget conference will be scheduled shortly after the passage on third reading.

**Watch Session Live:****Connect with  
St. Lucie County!****Mark Satterlee**

Deputy County Administrator

**Bob Adolphe**

Deputy County Administrator

**Nicole Fogarty**

Legislative Affairs Manager

**Mailing Address**  
**2300 Virginia Avenue**  
**Fort Pierce, FL 34982**

**PHONE**  
**(772) 462-1100**

**TDD**  
**(772) 462-1428**

**FAX**  
**(772) 462-2131**

**e-mail**  
**fogartyn@stlucieco.org**

**website**  
**www.stlucieco.gov**

**SENATE ADVANCES BEACH MAINTENANCE OVERHAUL**

A committee of state senators gave unanimous approval Wednesday afternoon to proposed legislation (SB 1590) that would overhaul the way Florida leaders manage the state's beaches.

The 7-0 vote by the Senate Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee, the bill's first Senate stop, occurred two days after a House subcommittee also passed the bill (HB 1213) unanimously. Sen. Rob Bradley, R-Fleming Island, whose district contains a small beach in the Big Bend area of the state, called the legislation "one of my favorite bills this session."

Sen. Jack Latvala, R-Clearwater, the Senate appropriations chairman, introduced the bill earlier this March in Naples.

Among its many provisions, the bill would:

- Establish a \$50 million annual funding commitment from the state's Land Acquisition Trust Fund, or 7.6 percent of the fund, whichever is less.
- Overhaul the way the Florida Department of Environmental Protection scores and ranks proposed beach projects; for the first time, projects would be scored on their return on investment and economic impact.
- Require DEP to establish a three-year work plan for beach projects, similar to the state's five-year road plan; currently, beaches are scored, ranked and funded on a year-by-year basis.
- Refocus the state's attention on managing sand around inlets, primary drivers of erosion, particularly on Florida's east coast.

**"WHISKEY AND WHEATIES" BILL NARROWLY PASSES  
SENATE**

A bill (SB 106) allowing grocery stores, big box retailers and other stores to sell liquor in the same space as other products was approved by the Florida Senate in a 21-17 vote on Thursday.

Similar bills stalled when they've come before legislators over the past three years. According to the Distilled Spirits Council, Florida would become the 28th state to allow the sale of liquor alongside wine and beer.

The measure must be approved by the House, where an identical bill (HB 81) is ready for a vote after narrowly passing through committee this week. If signed into law, it would be phased in over a five-year period.

**LOCAL BUSINESS TAX BILL**

A bill that puts a prohibition on future local business taxes made it through its first committee this week after a proposed cap on occupation business taxes was removed from the legislation.

HB 487 by Rep. Paul Renner, R-Paul Coast, passed the House Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee Tuesday. The legislation would prevent cities and counties from levying business taxes on any new occupations. It also creates an exemption from business taxes for veterans, spouses of veterans and low-income individuals.

The purpose of the bill was not "to affect the revenue of cities and counties" said Renner of the amendment axing the tax cap. "The purpose behind this bill is to reduce barriers to opportunity," Renner continued.

Amber Hughes representing the Florida League of Cities spoke in favor of the amendment. Hughes noted that the league was not voicing support for the provision that prevented counties and cities from levying new business taxes. "Any new cities that would be incorporated in your areas would not have access to this revenue stream," Hughes said.

The Senate Community Affairs Committee Wednesday approved a similar bill (SB 330) by Sen. Greg Steube, R-Sarasota, unanimously.